

Categorical Exclusion Documentation

A. Background

BLM Office: Butte Falls Resource Area, 3040 Biddle Rd., Medford, OR 97504

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: OR115-08-30

Proposed Action Title: Camp Stew II

Location of Proposed Action: The Camp Stew II project area is located in the west ½ of section 3, Township 35 South, Range 3 East, Willamette Meridian, Jackson County, Oregon.

Description of Proposed Action: This project would treat several 2-storied ponderosa pine plantations located on 59 acres of matrix allocated land and 5 acres of riparian reserve allocated land. The plantation was established in the 1960s with nonnative, off-site, or unknown seed source ponderosa pine which have not grown to the potential of the sites. The stand has naturally regenerated and developed into a 2-storied condition with an understory of Douglas-fir, incense cedar, white fir, and a very small amount of sugar pine along with some ponderosa pine. All Douglas-fir, incense cedar, white fir, and sugar pine have regenerated from native seed sources. Most of the ponderosa pine has regenerated from the planted ponderosa pine overstory.

Units 1-1, 1-2, 1-1R, and 1-2R presently have a density of approximately 151 trees per acre 8 inches or more in diameter at breast height (DBH) and 657 trees per acre less than 8 inches DBH. The stand density of conifers 8 inches DBH or more would be reduced to a relative density of 25 percent, or about 60 to 90 trees per acre (approximately 25 foot by 25 foot spacing) leaving an average DBH of 12 to 14 inches. All white fir less than 8 inches DBH will be slashed. The remaining natural regeneration of Douglas-fir, incense cedar, sugar pine, and ponderosa pine less than 8 inches DBH would be thinned to leave approximately 200 trees per acre (15 foot by 15 foot spacing) in the understory. The species preference for leave trees would be 1.) Douglas-fir, 2.) incense cedar, 3.) sugar pine, 4.) ponderosa pine, and 5.) white fir. If necessary, brush greater than 1 foot high significantly competing against conifers and/or hardwood trees less than 12 inches DBH would be slashed.

Whole tree yarding by low-ground pressure equipment of less than 6 pounds per square inch would be used to harvest the trees. Existing skid trails would be used and if additional skid trails are needed, they would be predetermined on the ground prior to harvesting at an average spacing of 100 feet. Landings would generally be around 0.25 acres in size with a maximum size of 0.5 acres. All trees 4 inches DBH or more would be removed from the units. All limb material and unprocessed unmerchanantable tops would be removed from the units, walked on by equipment to crush low to the ground, or chipped into the units. Slash from all trees less than 4 inches DBH would be lopped to within 1 foot above the ground. If necessary, slash within 100 feet to 150 feet on either side of BLM road #35-3E-1 would be hand piled.

Commercial thinning, precommercial thinning, and release treatments would be conducted in a Stewardship contract to promote biomass use in conjunction with the small sawlogs removal to stimulate the local economy. No temporary roads would be constructed.

Design Features for the Proposed Action:

Wildlife

- Seasonally restrict harvest activities and blasting from March 1 to September 30 within 0.25 miles of known northern spotted owl sites (within 0.5 miles for helicopter operations and blasting). The seasonal restriction will be waived if nonnesting is determined. If any new owls are discovered in harvest units following the contract award date, activities will be halted until mitigation options are determined.
- Seasonally restrict broadcast burning and site preparation from March 1 to July 15 within 0.25 miles of known active northern spotted owl nests. The seasonal restriction will be waived if nonnesting is determined.
- Retain known raptor nest trees.
- Seasonally restrict harvest activities from March 1 to August 1 within 0.25 miles of active raptor nests.
- Maintain all snags except those which need to be felled for safety reasons. Snags felled for safety reasons will be left on-site.
- Retain trees whose canopies are touching the canopy of a tree containing an artificial nest structure. Trees felled outside this buffer will be directionally felled away from the tree with the nest structure.

Riparian Reserves

- Store all hazardous materials and petroleum products in durable containers placed outside of riparian reserves so an accidental spill will be contained and not drain into the stream system.
- Refuel equipment in locations outside riparian reserves.
- Minimize and confine the use of ground-based equipment within riparian reserves to existing skid trails, roads, and landings.
- Stack hand piles more than 50 feet from fish-bearing, perennial streams and more than 25 feet from non-fish-bearing, intermittent streams.
- Maintain a no-harvest buffer no less than the average height of the dominant and codominant trees in the stand.
- Operate ground-based machinery outside the inner gorge of the stream.
- Operate ground-based machinery on the uphill side of slope breaks (greater than 20 percent); however, trees may be pulled up from below the slope break.
- Construct new landings outside riparian reserves.
- Use erosion control techniques on skid trails to minimize sediment from moving off-site (i.e., apply native grass seed and weed-free mulch, scatter chipped material, or scatter limbs and other fine material).
- Scarify skid trails upon final thinning.
- Rip designated skid trails upon final thinning where compaction levels are high.

- Allow tractor/skidding equipment operation above the slope break where slopes are less than 20 percent; generally limit to one trail parallel to the stream.
- Operate equipment at least 100 feet from streams, regardless of no-harvest buffer.

Archaeology

- Apply mitigating measures to areas containing known archaeological sites. Buffers will be determined based upon proposed treatment, site-specific environmental conditions, and protection recommendations.
- Stop work and notify the BLM within 12 hours if an archaeological site is discovered during the project.

Special Status Plants

- Protect known Special Status vascular plant, lichen, bryophyte, and fungi sites. Buffers will be determined based upon species, proposed treatment, site-specific environmental conditions, and available management recommendations.

Noxious Weeds

- Wash vehicles and equipment that will travel off system roads prior to entry onto BLM-administered lands.

Roads

- Seasonally restrict all rock hauling, timber hauling, and landing operations on native surface or inadequately rocked roads whenever soil moisture conditions or rain events could result in road damage or the transport of sediment to nearby stream channels, generally October 15 to May 15.
- Restrict all rock hauling, timber hauling, and landing operations on adequately rocked roads whenever soil moisture conditions or rain events could result in road damage or the transport of sediment to nearby stream channels, especially between the dates of October 15 and May 15. Allow road or landing use between those dates only during periods of dry weather.
- Restrict all road renovation, closure, and improvement work from October 15 to May 15, or when soil moisture exceeds 25 percent.
- Block or barricade identified roads after use and before beginning of rainy season (generally by October 15).
- Restrict the application of dust abatement materials, such as lignin, Mag-Chloride, or approved petroleum-based dust abatement products, during or just before wet weather, and at stream crossings or other locations that could result in direct delivery to a water body (typically not within 25 feet of a water body or stream channel).

Fuel Hazard Reduction

- Treat activity slash as necessary to reduce or eliminate additional fuel loading.

- Conduct prescribed burns within two years following harvest and plantation thinning activities. Provide an approved prescribed fire plan that complies with Prescribed Fire Handbook H-9214-1 prior to the ignition of all prescribed burn units. The prescribed burn plan would contain measurable objectives, a predetermined prescription, and an escape fire plan to be implemented in the event of an escape.
- To prevent fire escapes and to minimize damage to residual vegetation/trees, schedule burning to occur when weather and fuel conditions allow for lower fire intensities (typically late fall through spring). In addition, patrol and mop-up burned areas to prevent areas from reburning and becoming escape fires. Use approved BLM water sources in prescribed burn activities
- Construct firelines by hand using hand tools such as chainsaws, pulaskis, and shovels. When possible, use already existing barriers such as roads or spur roads as control lines (firelines). When such barriers are not available, firelines will be constructed. Most hand constructed firelines consist of removal of all fuels down to mineral soil for a width of one to three feet. The line width is dependant on the fuel type present; narrower firelines are constructed in light fuels, such as grass or duff, and wider firelines are constructed in heavier fuels, such as high loadings of downed woody material and brush.
- Water bar all firelines where slope exceeds 15 percent to control water runoff and limit potential erosion.
- Use hoselines in conjunction with or independently of firelines. In riparian areas, hoselines may be used independently to establish a wet line that reduces the extent of the fire backing into identified areas.
- Conduct prescribed burning in compliance with Oregon Department of Forestry's Smoke Management Plan. Smoke emission control could also include conducting mop-up as soon as possible after ignition is complete, covering hand piles to permit burning during the rainy season, and burning lighter fuels with lower fuel moistures to facilitate rapid and complete combustion, while burning larger fuels with higher moisture levels to minimize consumption.
- To reduce the amount of surface fuel loadings and emissions from prescribed burning, remove slash from the site, when feasible, by using whole tree harvesting, chipping limb slash in the unit, walking mechanized harvest equipment over the slash on skid roads, or combinations of all three methods.
- Conduct a post activity fuels assessment on all areas proposed for treatment, including stewardship projects. Modifications or additional treatment recommendations will be based on the fuels assessment and the amount of slash created during harvest and stewardship activities. Additional understory thinning followed by hand piling and hand pile burning may be needed to further reduce the fuels hazard to an appropriate level within all units.

Thinning, Skidding, Loading, and Hauling

- Require a Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasure Plan prior to operation. The Plan will include, but not be limited to, identification of hazardous substances

to be used in the project area and purchaser's representatives responsible for supervising initial containment action for releases and subsequent cleanup.

- Conduct all mechanical harvester (includes felling and bunching) operations using low ground pressure (maximum 6 pounds per square inch) equipment.
- Use existing skid roads in harvest units, where feasible. All other skid roads must be designated prior to falling timber at an average spacing of 100 feet.
- Operate ground-based equipment on slopes generally less than 35 percent.
- Scatter large and small logging material on the first 100 feet of skid trail from its intersection with the haul road to prevent runoff and limit OHV use.
- Waterbar skid trails based on gradient and erosion class guidelines (RMP p.167).
- Restrict ground-based yarding when soil moisture content at a 6-inch depth is greater than 25 percent by weight.
- To minimize soil disturbance, mechanized Feller-Bunchers and harvesters used off designated skid trails must have an arm capable of reaching at least 20 feet, must walk on existing or created slash when possible, and must minimize turning by avoiding return trips to the same skid trail whenever feasible.
- Limit landings to less than 0.5 acres in size.
- Block skid roads that intersect haul roads at the end of seasonal use.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: *Medford District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (RMP)*

Date Approved: June 1995

The proposed action is in conformance with the RMP because it is specifically provided for in the following RMP decision(s):

1. Provide early successional habitat (RMP p. 38) by precommercial thinning and release treatments to influence species dominance (RMP p. 185).
2. Supply a sustainable source of timber to provide jobs and contribute to community stability (RMP p. 38) by precommercial thinning, release treatments, and commercial thinning:
 - a. To control stand density, maintain stand vigor, and place stands on developmental paths so that desired stand characteristics result in the future (RMP p. 185).
 - b. To assure a high level of sustained timber productivity for commodity production (RMP p. 187).
3. Contribute, over time, landscapes that would trend toward a forest composed of stands containing a variety of structures, stands containing trees of varying age and size, and stands with an assortment of canopy configurations (RMP p. 187).

C. Compliance with NEPA

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9 C(7) as follows:

Harvesting live trees not to exceed 70 acres, requiring no more than 0.5 mile of temporary road construction. Such activities:

- (a) Shall not include even-aged regeneration harvests or vegetation type conversions.*
- (b) May include incidental removal of trees for landings, skid trails, and road clearing.*
- (c) May include temporary roads which are defined as roads authorized by contract, permit, lease, other written authorization, or emergency operation not intended to be part of the BLM transportation system and not necessary for long-term resource management. Temporary roads shall be designed to standards appropriate for the intended uses, considering safety, cost of transportation, and impacts on land and resources; and*
- (d) Shall require the treatment of temporary roads constructed or used so as to permit the reestablishment by artificial or natural means, or vegetative cover on the roadway and areas where the vegetative cover was disturbed by the construction or use of the road, as necessary to minimize erosion from the disturbed area. Such treatment shall be designed to reestablish vegetative cover as soon as practicable, but at least within 10 years after the termination of the contract.*

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Removing individual trees for sawlogs, specialty products, or fuelwood.*
- (b) Commercial thinning of overstocked stands to achieve the desired stocking level to increase health and vigor.*

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment as documented in the following table. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2 apply.

The BLM considered the areas proposed for thinning in this Categorical Exclusion for harvest in a recent planned timber sale and began analysis in the *Bowen Arrow/Twin Ranch Timber Sales and Landscape Restoration Environmental Assessment* (EA# OR115-06-06). As part of that analysis BLM completed all special status species surveys. A windstorm in January 2008 occurred prior to completion of the EA and a subsequent Decision. In response to the changed circumstances on the ground, the BLM is reevaluating the Bowen Arrow/Twin Ranch project.

D. Categorical Exclusion Extraordinary Circumstances Documentation

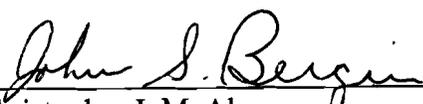
The proposed categorical exclusion action will:	YES	NO
<p>Rationale:</p> <p>Thinning operations will follow Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards designed to prevent job-related illness or injuries. Thinning operations will remove or fall standing trees that represent a hazard to workers and the public.</p> <p>The BLM will require the use of signs and flaggers for controlling traffic on roads that pass through the project area when necessary for public safety.</p>		
<p>Rationale:</p> <p>The thinning unit is located outside the unique geographic areas listed above. There are no park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild and scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands; floodplains; national monuments; or other ecologically significant or critical areas within the project area.</p> <p>The project archeologist produced a cultural resource survey report and documented on <i>Project Tracking Form for Non-Exempt Undertakings under the Oregon BLM/SHPO Protocol</i> for Cultural Project Number OR110-08-29 a “No Effect Determination, No Resources” for the Bowen Arrow-Twin Ranch Timber Sale project. There will be no impact on cultural resources as a result of this project.</p> <p>The thinning would not change the overall habitat function as it now exists for migratory birds; therefore, the proposed action would not have significant impacts on migratory birds.</p>		
<p>Rationale:</p> <p>This project will not have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources. Thinning small trees to improve forest health and lower the fire hazard potential has generally been accepted by all public interest groups.</p>		
<p>Rationale:</p> <p>A BLM interdisciplinary team of resource specialists reviewed this project and determined there is no threat of significant environmental effects or unique or unknown environmental risks.</p>		
<p>Rationale:</p> <p>Thinning operations have occurred on the Medford District in the past and are likely to occur in</p>		

The proposed categorical exclusion action will:	YES	NO
<p>the future. However, each thinning project contains its own set of conditions that must be evaluated on its own merit, as this project has been. Land use allocations and environmental conditions, such as remaining vegetation, slopes, soils, and streams, are unique to each project and must be considered anew as each opportunity for thinning occurs.</p>		
<p>Rationale: The BLM interdisciplinary team of resource specialists for this project reviewed the project and found no resource issues of concern that would be affected by this project. Thinning would reduce the overall fire hazard in the pine plantation units, promote the vigor of the remaining trees, and place the stand on a path that will result in the desired future stand characteristics.</p>		
<p>Rationale: The project archeologist produced a cultural resource survey report and documented on <i>Project Tracking Form for Non-Exempt Undertakings under the Oregon BLM/SHPO Protocol</i> for Cultural Project Number OR110-08-29 a “No Effect Determination, No Resources” for the Bowen Arrow-Twin Ranch Timber Sale project. The lands in the Camp Stew II project area were included in the cultural resource survey. There will be no impact on cultural resources as a result of this project.</p>		
<p>Rationale: The BLM surveyed the thinning area for listed and proposed Threatened and Endangered plants and wildlife and has determined no significant impacts on the above concerns. No threatened and endangered upland wildlife species were found in the area; project design features are in place to protect any if they are found. Project design features are in place to improve riparian areas, protect water quality, and aquatic habitats. Coho salmon habitat is approximately 3.5 miles downstream, therefore no impacts to coho salmon are anticipated from the proposed action. No threatened and endangered plants were found in the area, and project design features are in place to protect any if they are found.</p>		
<p>Rationale: A BLM interdisciplinary team of resource specialists reviewed the project for compliance with applicable laws such as the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Clean Air Act, and Archaeological Resources Protection Act, among others. The specialists found the project conforms with the direction given in the Medford District RMP for the management of public lands; the RMP complies with all relevant laws (RMP p. 7-8).</p>		

The proposed categorical exclusion action will:	YES	NO
<p>Rationale: Based on past projects in the Butte Falls Resource Area, the proposed thinning will provide job opportunities in communities such as Butte Falls, the closest incorporated city to the project area. In the 2000 census, 22 percent of the population of Butte Falls was below the poverty level. This thinning project would provide job opportunities from the thinning of the trees, to providing biomass to fuel electric generating plants, to processing wood into lumber. These jobs would be available to low income or minority populations.</p>		
<p>2.11 Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).</p>		X
<p>Rationale: The project archeologist produced a cultural resource survey report and documented on <i>Project Tracking Form for Non-Exempt Undertakings under the Oregon BLM/SHPO Protocol</i> for Cultural Project Number OR110-08-29 a "No Effect Determination, No Resources" for the Bowen Arrow-Twin Ranch Timber Sale project. The lands in the Camp Stew II project area were included in the cultural resource survey. No Indian sacred sites were identified during the survey.</p>		
<p>2.12 Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).</p>		X
<p>Rationale: The BLM surveyed the proposed thinning area for noxious weeds and no noxious weed populations were detected. Past and existing activities in the project area, such as recreational use and motor vehicle traffic, can contribute to the introduction and spread of noxious weeds and invasive species. In order to reduce the risk of introducing noxious weeds into the project area during thinning activities, project design features would be followed.</p>		

During the design of this Proposed Action I gave special consideration to the potential for significant impacts to threatened and endangered or Bureau sensitive species of fish, wildlife and plants, cultural resources, noxious weeds, and soil/hydrologic resources. Where appropriate, surveys have been completed for these resources and buffer areas have been established where deemed necessary. The design features included in Section A of the Categorical Exclusion Documentation will further protect these resources from the potential for significant impacts resulting from implementation of the Proposed Action

E. Signature of Authorizing Official


 Christopher J. McAlear
 (Acting) Field Manager
 Butte Falls Resource Area


 Date

F. Contact Person

For additional information concerning this categorical exclusion review, contact Bill Ripley, Stewardship/Biomass Forester, Butte Falls Resource Area, 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504, telephone 541-618-2307.

Reviewers:

Name	Title	Date	Initials
Jean Williams	NEPA Coordinator	9/12/08	JW
Marcia Wineteer	Botanist	8/8/08	MW
Linda Hale Dave Roelofs	Wildlife Biologist	8/7/08	ZH
Steve Liebhardt	Fisheries Biologist	8/6/08	SL
Shawn Simpson	Hydrologist	8/11/08	SLS
Ken Van Etten	Soil Scientist	8/11/08	KBV.
Jessica Buchanan	Fire/Fuels Specialist	8/11/08	JBB
John McNeel	Anne Ramage Cultural Specialist	9/12/08	JR
Randy Bryan	Engineer	8-26-08	RRB
Trish Lindaman	Outdoor Recreation Specialist	8-6-08	PAZ

**Decision Record for
Camp Stew II Categorical Exclusion OR115-08-30**

Based on the categorical exclusion documentation for the Camp Stew II project, I have determined the proposed action involves no significant impacts to the human environment and requires no further environmental analysis.

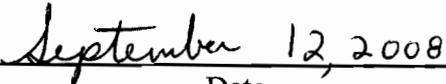
My decision is to implement the thinning of up to 70 acres of 2-storied pine plantation on matrix lands in the west ½ of section 1 in Township 35 South, Range 3 East. Thinning will reduce the density of the overstory ponderosa pine to about 60 to 90 trees per acre. All white fir less than 8 inches DBH will be slashed. The remaining Douglas-fir, incense cedar, sugar pine, and ponderosa pine in the understory that are less than 8 inches DBH will be thinned to a density of about 200 trees per acre. Trees will be whole tree yarded and activity slash will be hand piled and burned.

Administrative Remedy

Notice of the forest management decision for the action described in the categorical exclusion documentation will be posted on the Medford District BLM website at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/medford/plans/index.php>. The action is subject to protest under 43 CFR section 4.450-2. A decision in response to a protest is subject to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals under 43 CFR part 4.



Christopher J. McAlear
(Acting) Field Manager
Butte Falls Resource Area

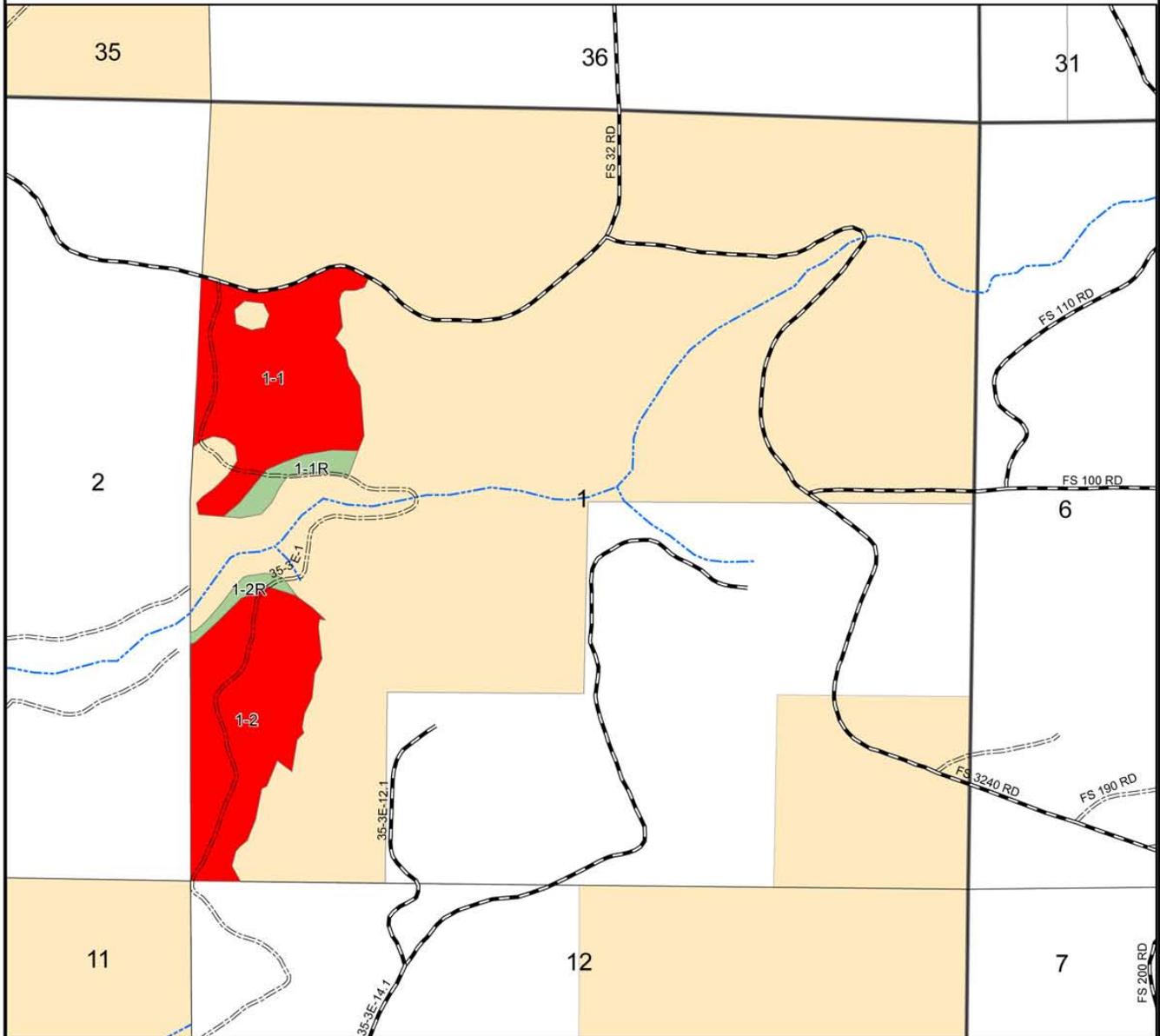


Date

Camp Stew, Modification Number 4

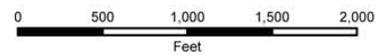
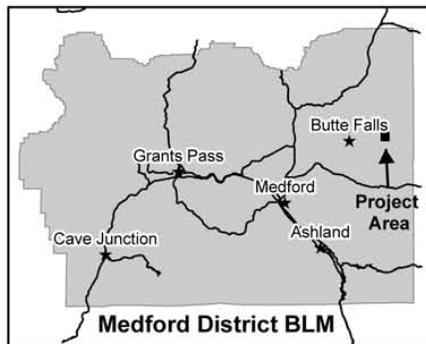
Contract Number
HAC052028

T35S R3E Sec. 1



CampStew II Unit

-  Upland
-  Riparian
-  Paved
-  Rock or Gravel
-  Natural
-  Perennial Stream
-  BLM-Administered
-  Private



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management
Medford District
August 2008



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